

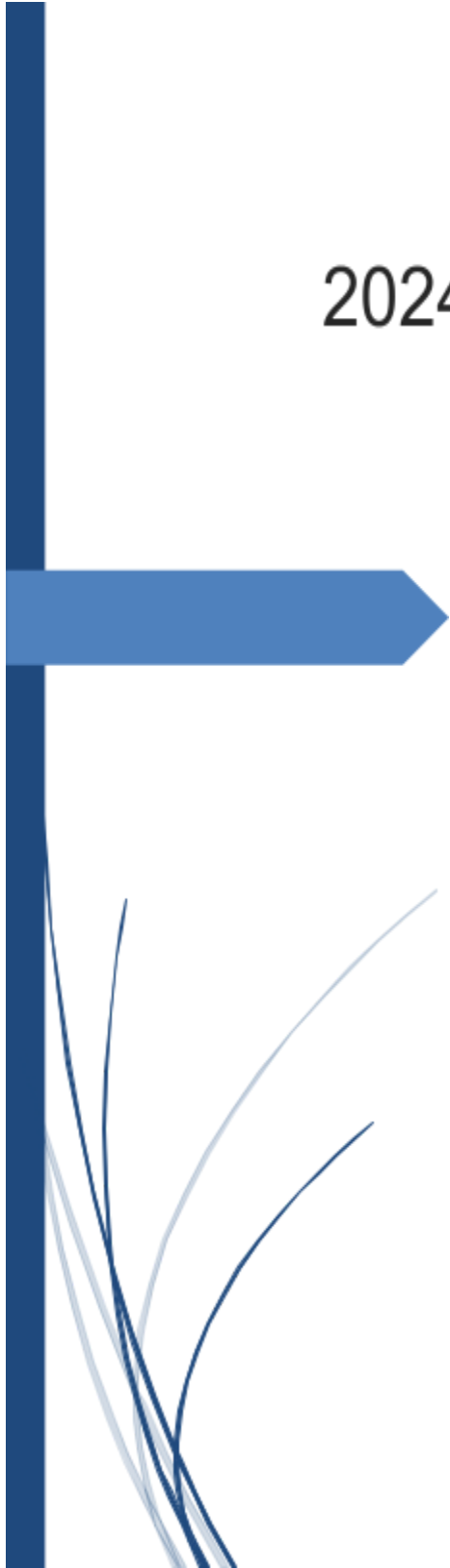
John Howard

THE JOHN HOWARD SOCIETY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

2024 Point in Time Count Report

Prepared by the
John Howard Society
of Prince Edward Island

March 2025



Introduction

In October of 2024, the John Howard Society of PEI led a Point in Time (PiT) Count locally on Prince Edward Island on behalf of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada (HICC). This is part of a nationally coordinated count across the country to better measure and understand homelessness in Canada.

The last time the PiT Count was conducted in PEI was in April of 2021, which came with certain challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fortunately, there were no weather or health crisis events that impacted the 2024 count, meaning it should better reflect the current situation in PEI. It also allowed a greater number and percentage of individuals to be surveyed, increasing the depth of information gathered.

The John Howard Society of PEI is funded to oversee and carry out the PiT count for Designated Communities as per the Government of Canada Reaching Home Program, which includes two locations - Charlottetown and Summerside. These are historically the only two locations where individuals were enumerated or surveyed. However, in 2024, for the first time ever, the John Howard Society of PEI partnered with many different organizations and entities across all regions and various sectors to enumerate and survey the entire island. This marks the beginning of a Province-wide view on homelessness, recognizing that the problem is no longer restricted to only urban areas, but rather exists everywhere.

Timing

In addition to the 24-hour enumeration period during which communities count and survey individuals, Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada provided communities with the opportunity to extend their survey period to increase the number of individuals surveyed and thus the amount of information gathered. The John Howard Society of PEI and its partners saw this as a chance to maximize the efforts of those involved and better understand the scope of the problem. Our 24-hour enumeration period occurred from Monday, September 30, 2024, at 8pm until Tuesday, October 1, 2024 at 8pm. We then began our extended survey period on Wednesday, October 2, 2024 at 7am which lasted until Friday, October 11, 2024 at 11:59pm. This created a window of about 12 days whereby individuals could be surveyed.

Survey Considerations

As with any initiative or survey, there's an inherent understanding that it is not possible to locate and survey one hundred percent of the individuals in the community, particularly given the nature of the population participating in the Point in Time Count. However, the methodology used and the data obtained from the PiT Count are Federally-approved and considered to be best practice by the Government of Canada. Furthermore, every surveyor was a staff member who is an existing service provider in the client services field and participated in standardized training prior to the PiT Count. This ensured the highest level of competency while maximizing consistency.

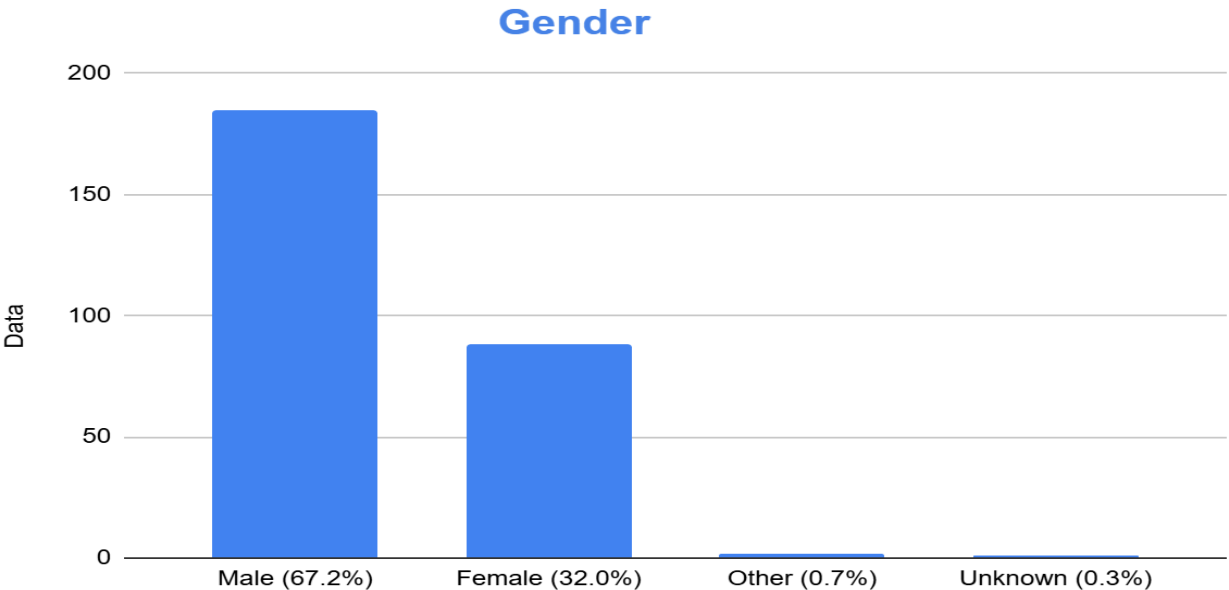
Results

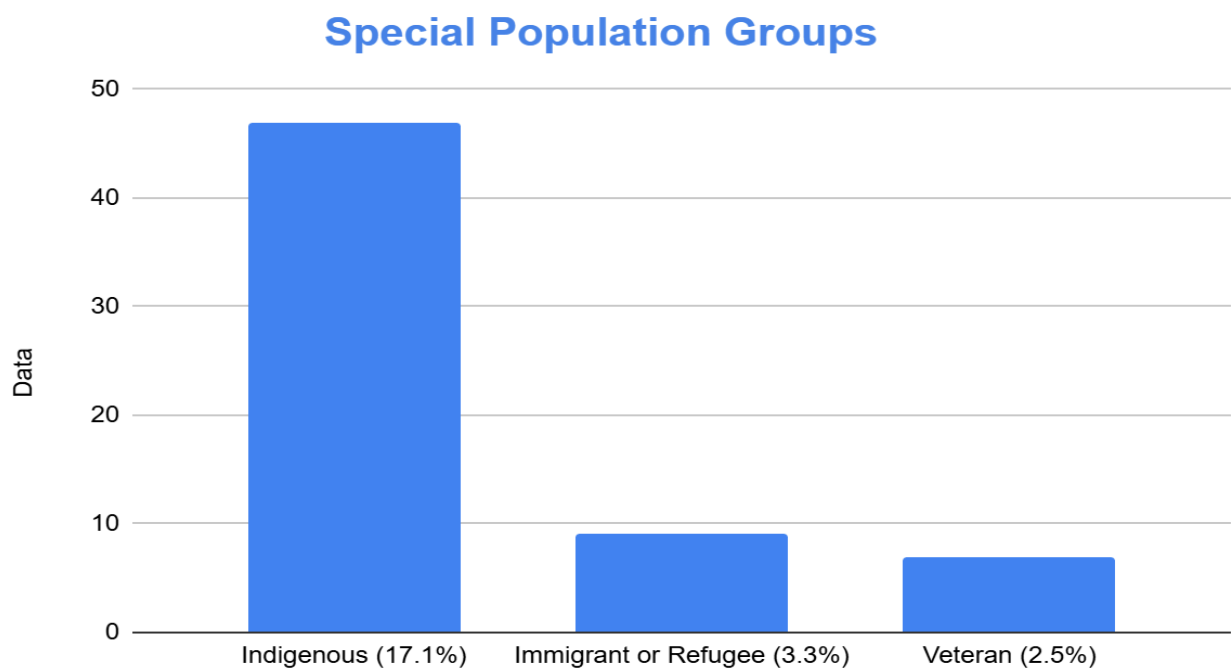
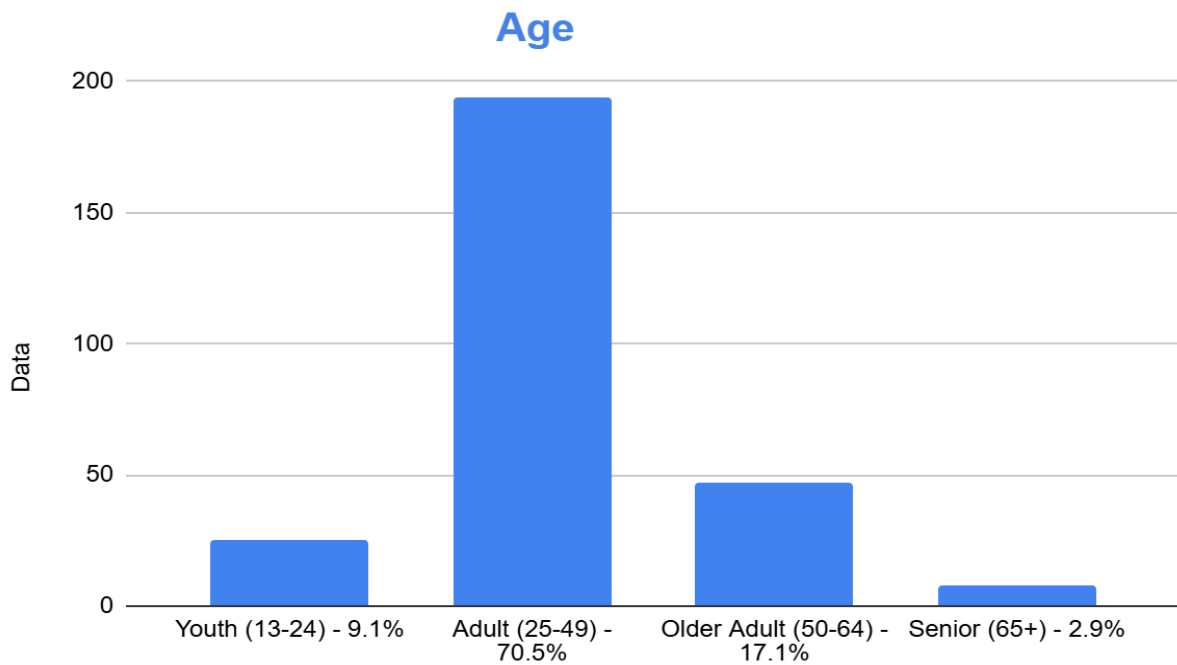
Number of Participants

There were 275 individuals who completed a PiT Count survey, which forms the survey group. There were another 43 individuals experiencing homelessness who did not or could not complete a survey, which forms the enumeration group. Therefore, the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness was 318. That marks an increase from 59 individuals surveyed and 88 enumerated in 2021 for a total of 147.

Demographics

For demographics, we only have information from the survey group. Of the 275 individuals in the survey group, the following is a breakdown of gender, age, Indigenous Status, Immigration Status, and Veteran Status:

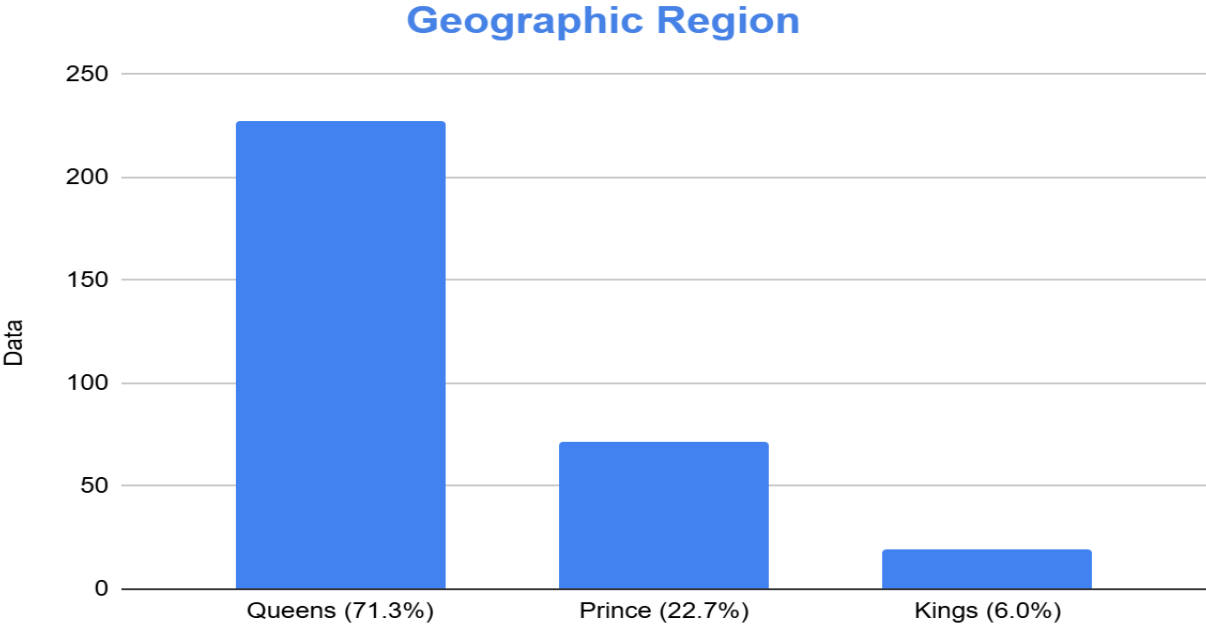




We'll provide more information about changes in demographics compared to the 2021 PiT Count in the final section of this report. One thing worth noting here is that the age ranges are in line with those used by Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada, which differs from what was used in previous counts.

Geographic Region

As part of the survey and enumeration process, individuals identified staying in one of the three primary counties - Queens, Prince, or Kings. The breakdown by location is as follows:

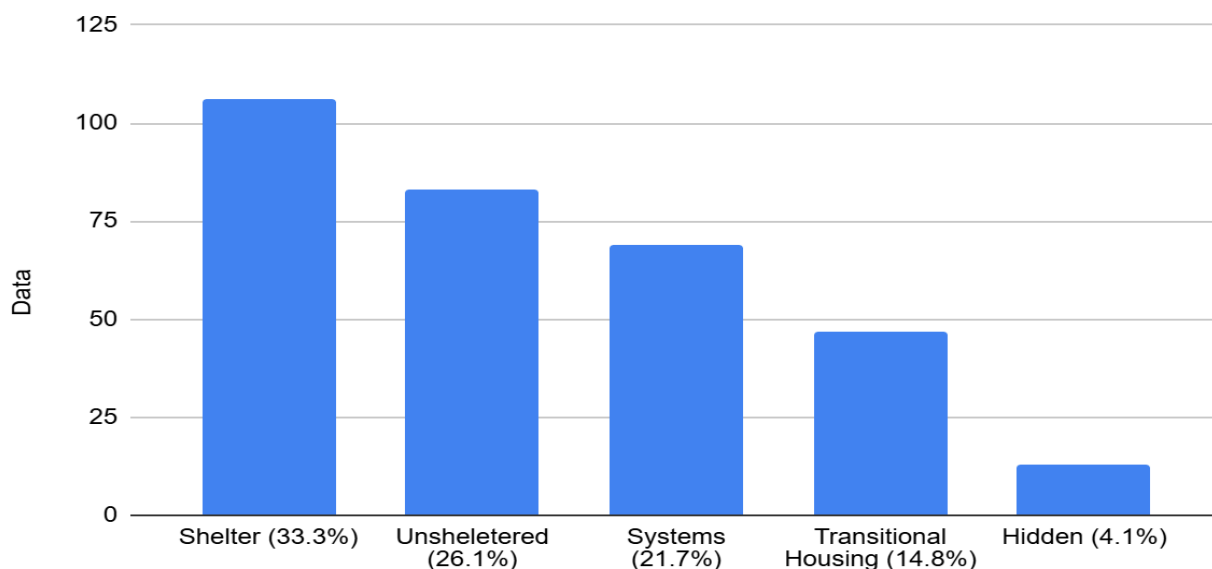


We'll provide more information about changes in location compared to the 2021 PiT Count in the final section of this report. One thing worth noting here is that because many of the services such as emergency shelters and transitional housing programs are located in Queens County, some of the individuals captured in that region may be from Prince or Kings County and wish to return there in the future. If that were the case, then the actual Queens County number would be lower and the other two counties would be higher, but it's impossible to know for sure.

Type of Homelessness

As part of the survey and enumeration process, individuals were asked to identify the type of homelessness they experienced the night prior from 11 different options, which are grouped into five categories, including shelter, unsheltered, hidden homelessness, systems, and transitional housing. This is generally accepted as the most common way to group the types of homelessness an individual may report during the PiT Count. The breakdown for the type of homelessness is as follows:

Type of Homelessness



We'll provide more information about changes in location compared to the 2021 PiT Count in the final section of this report.

Data Comparison

In this section, you'll find a review of the data obtained from the 2024 Point in Time Count to examine changes compared to the 2021 PiT Count and consider what homelessness on PEI looks like based on the 2024 PiT Count. It's important to remember that the COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on homelessness and society as a whole in 2021, which may have influenced some of the data. We'll further highlight areas that may have been impacted as we compare the data from both PiT Counts. It's also important to keep in mind that the demographic data comes only from the 275 individuals surveyed while location and housing type data is collected from all 318 individuals.

Data Comparison #1 - Gender

There was about a 20% swing in gender. The number of male-identifying individuals increased by 10.2% while the number of female-identifying individuals decreased by 9.0%. Given that families are often prioritized for housing and female-identifying parents or guardians are more likely to have custody of their children, it makes sense that there would be more male-identifying individuals experiencing homelessness.

Data Comparison #2 - Age

As mentioned above, the age ranges changed in 2024 to mirror those of the Government of Canada. As a result, it's difficult to compare changes from 2021 to 2024 because the parameters are different. It's possible there was an increase in the percentage of youth (ages 13-24) experiencing homelessness, but it's impossible to know for certain.

Data Comparison #3 - Indigenous

The percentage of Indigenous individuals experiencing homelessness nearly doubled from 2021 to 2024, increasing from 9.0% to 17.1%. This reflects the growing need for Indigenous-specific services and solutions to homelessness. It also reinforces our community's decision to focus on Indigenous-Identifying individuals as a priority population when allocating housing program spaces or units through Coordinated Access.

Data Comparison #4 - Immigration/Citizenship

Similarly, the percentage of individuals who reported an immigrant or refugee status experiencing homelessness tripled from 2021 to 2024, increasing from 1.0% to 3.3%. This illustrates the diversification in ethnicity in PEI that has occurred over the past three years and also points to a potential need for specialized services for individuals who are immigrating to PEI.

Data Comparison #5 - Veterans

As with the first two special population groups, the percentage of individuals who identified as Veteran, which includes former RCMP members experiencing homelessness, increased from 1.0% to 2.5%, representing two and a half times more people. Unfortunately, this is a national trend, which has led to the Government of Canada funding and implementing Veteran-specific housing programs across the Country. For Prince Edward Island, the John Howard Society receives the funding for this program, which is in full operation and has already begun assisting Veterans to find safe and affordable housing.

Data Comparison #6 - Location

In 2021, the only two locations where individuals were surveyed or enumerated were Charlottetown and Summerside. Because the dataset was combined, we do not have separate numbers for how many individuals surveyed or enumerated came from which location. While this makes it challenging to compare in terms of percentages, we can assume that the majority of the individuals were located in Charlottetown because that's where many of the shelters and services were, and in some cases still are, located, and we know that the overall raw number of individuals has increased in both places.

As we broke down above, in 2024, 227 or 71.4% were located in Queens County, 72 or 22.6% were located in Prince County, and 19 or 6.0% were located in Kings County. While the data showing that the majority of individuals were staying in Queens County at the time of the PiT Count may mirror what was happening in 2021, it's clear that the number of individuals experiencing homelessness has increased. It also reinforces the fact that homelessness is an island-wide issue occurring in urban and rural areas. Furthermore, with fewer shelters and services available in Prince and Kings County, some of the individuals who were staying in Queens County at the time of the count may only be there because that's where they could get the help they needed. This is particularly likely to be the case for individuals who would prefer to remain in Kings County given that there is not a homeless or domestic violence shelter. We did try to account for this by asking individuals to identify their region in the survey, but it's difficult to know how accurate that is.

Data Comparison #7 - Type of Homelessness

In 2021, over half the individuals that participated in the count (52%) were staying in transitional housing compared to just 14.8% in 2024. This correlated with an increase in every other housing type except hidden homelessness, which decreased significantly from 17.0% to 4.1% in 2024. This means that nearly 70% of the individuals experiencing homelessness in 2021 were either in transitional housing or able to stay with someone they knew for a period of time. That combined number dropped to 18.9% in 2024, forcing individuals to search for other options.

One of those options was staying in a shelter, where the percentage of individuals increased from 18% to 33%, nearly double. This is partially a result of more shelter beds available given the opening of multiple new facilities and the expansion of others. It's also indicative of more people struggling to find and maintain housing, including transitional housing programs or relying on support from friends and family.

This is further evidenced by an increase in the number of individuals who were staying in systems, which would include hospitals, correctional facilities, mental health and substance use facilities, etc., without housing to go to when discharged or released. That number rose from 13.0% in 2021 to 21.6% in 2024.

Finally, during the Point in Time Count in 2021, there were zero individuals staying in an unsheltered environment, which would include a vehicle, an encampment site, a park, an abandoned building, a business vestibule, and outdoors. This is another data point where the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact because homeless individuals were deemed to be at an increased risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19, resulting in additional funding and temporary housing measures to get them out of unsheltered environments.

During the 2024 PiT Count, 83 individuals were staying in an unsheltered environment, representing 26.1% of the total group. Unfortunately, this too is a national trend, which has led to specialized funding across the Country. This reinforces the need for outreach programs and services and provides further evidence for our community's decision to focus on unsheltered individuals as a priority population when allocating housing program spaces or units through Coordinated Access.

Data Comparison #8 - Number of Homeless Individuals

The number of individuals surveyed increased from 59 to 275 while the number of individuals enumerated decreased from 88 to 43. There are a variety of reasons for this, including limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, an increase in service-sector staff participation in surveying in 2024, and the concerted effort to survey individuals in 2024 to obtain as much data as possible. Plus, the expansion in survey locations to include Kings County and other surrounding towns beyond Charlottetown and Summerside in Queens and Prince County.

The total number of homeless individuals went from 147 in 2021 to 318 in 2024. This represents an increase of 171 individuals across the island. Multiple things influenced this spike. One is our vacancy rate, which dropped from an already low 1.2% in 2021 to 0.8% in 2024. This makes it challenging for anyone to find housing, especially the population group involved in the PiT Count. In addition to there being fewer options available, the cost of those options went up significantly. Using Charlottetown for reference, the cost of rent rose \$168 for a one-bedroom, \$120 for a two-bedroom, and \$140 for a three-bedroom per CMHC. Furthermore, the number of

individuals seeking housing has grown just as the population has, rising from 154,331 in 2021 to 179,301 in October of 2024.

While there are numerous factors contributing to the significant increase in individuals experiencing homelessness, what's clear is that the problem has gotten worse.

Conclusion

The 2024 Point in Time Count shows that homelessness is a growing issue in Prince Edward Island that is affecting every community and all subpopulation groups. This report demonstrates a need for safe and affordable housing, transitional housing, housing support services, and specialized programs for target populations such as Indigenous, Immigrants/Refugees, and Veterans.

For questions about this report, please contact the John Howard Society of PEI at 902-566-5425 or by email at johnhowardsociety@jhspei.ca.